

Catholic Church Records: Baptisms

Latin America “How to” Guide, Intermediate Level: Instruction

February 2017

GOAL

This guide will teach you how to extract genealogical information from a Spanish baptism record by using key words and phrases.

INTRODUCTION

The majority of the paragraph form Spanish baptism records follow a particular format, though they may vary slightly by location (i.e. Mexico or Peru).

You may want to consult the following “How to” Guides before continuing:

- [Reading Spanish Handwritten Records](#)
- [Inserting Special Characters](#)

HOW TO

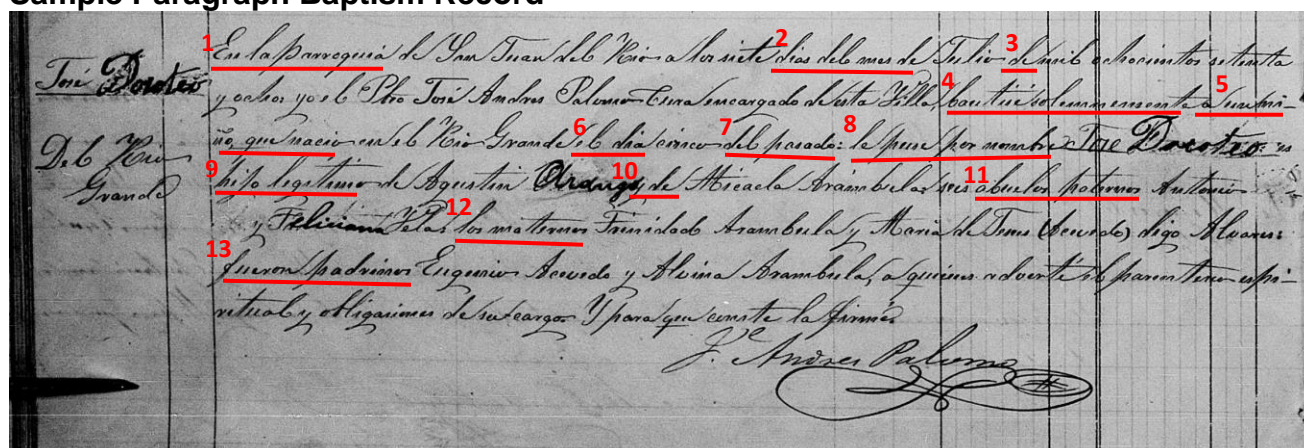
Before you begin extracting genealogical information from documents written in Spanish, it is important to understand the endings of nouns and adjectives.

In Spanish, nouns and adjectives have either a masculine or a feminine ending. Masculine nouns and adjectives generally end in –o, while feminine nouns and adjectives generally end in –a. Additionally, articles have a masculine and feminine form; the articles must match the gender. Masculine nouns and adjectives generally use the article *el*, while the feminine nouns and adjectives use the article *la*. In baptism, marriage, and death records, you typically find the relationship indicators like *hijo* (child), *esposo* (spouse), or *viudo* (widower). These words usually describe the main person in the records. They reflect the pattern of masculine and feminine word endings, as the table below indicates:

Spanish	English	Spanish	English	Spanish	English
<i>el hijo</i>	the son	<i>el esposo</i>	the husband	<i>el viudo</i>	the widower
<i>la hija</i>	the daughter	<i>la esposa</i>	the wife	<i>la viuda</i>	the widow

This is an important distinction when trying to learn the sex of a person from the records, as most Spanish names have a male and female version. Sometimes it is difficult to distinguish the difference between a handwritten o or a. If you have a hard time reading the ending, the articles of the paragraph might also be able to help you distinguish the sex of the person.

Sample Paragraph Baptism Record



Source: <https://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:3S3Y-616Y-JS> : accessed 21 March 2016.

Paragraph Baptism Record in Outline in English

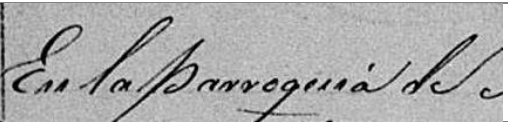

In the parish¹ of (location), (day) day of the month of² (month) of³ (year). I the (name of the priest) of this town solemnly baptized⁴ a child that was born⁵ in the place (location) the day⁶ (day of birth) last⁷ was given the name⁸ (name of the child) legitimate child⁹ of (father's name) and of¹⁰ (mother's name) the paternal grandparents¹¹ (paternal grandfather's name) and (paternal grandmother's name) the maternal¹² [the word "grandparents" is implied and usually left out] (maternal grandfather's name) and (maternal grandmother's name) the godparents were¹³ (names of godparents) to whom I advised of their spiritual relationship and the obligation of their charge. And for the record I sign....


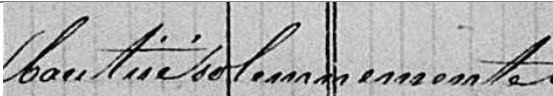
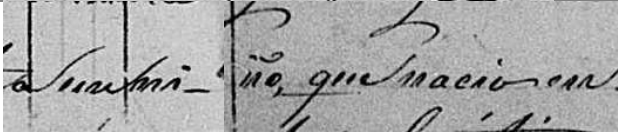

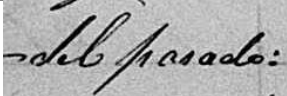
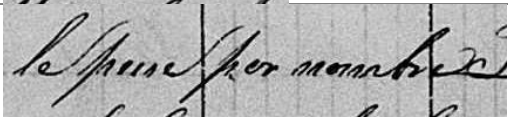
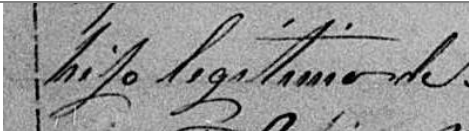
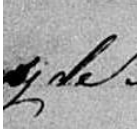
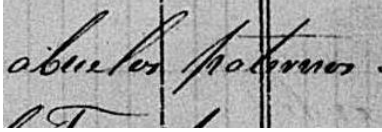
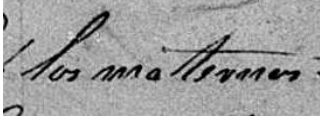
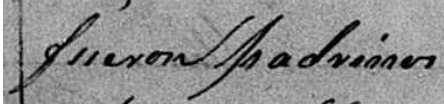
Margins

As in the baptism record above, the child's name is often recorded in the margin. Sometimes the surname is not included with the child's name. Other times, the place of birth is also recorded in the margin, which can be a very small geographic location like a village or a ranch. Keep in mind the name may be abbreviated (for example, M^a for María).

Key Words

The following key words will indicate the essential genealogical information. Depending on the context, the information may come before or after the key word. Note that the Spanish words and phrases are written in standardized Spanish. In some cases, the examples provided may differ in spelling, diacritics, or conjugation of the word. Keep in mind that phrases and even words may be split between two lines.

English	Spanish	Information given	Example
1. In the parish...	En la parroquia ...	<u>followed</u> by the town or name of the parish	
2. ... day of the month ofdías del mes de ...	<u>before</u> this will be the day written	

		out, <u>followed</u> by the month	
3. of ...	de ...	<u>followed</u> by the year written out	
4. solemnly baptized	bauticé solemnemente	<u>followed</u> by the first phrase listing the child's sex	
5. a child that was born...	un niño que nació en...	Look at the end of "un niño" to determine the gender. In this case, it is a male.	
6. the day...	el día...	<u>followed</u> by the day of birth written out	
7. ... last	... del pasado	<u>before</u> this the day of birth written out.	
8. was given the name...	le puse por nombre ...	<u>followed</u> by the name of the child	
9. legitimate son of...	hijo legítimo de...	<u>followed</u> by the names of the parents. This also indicates the sex.	
10. ... and of y de ...	<u>before</u> this is the father's name, <u>followed</u> by the mother's name	
11. the paternal grandparents...	abuelos paternos ...	<u>followed</u> by the paternal grandparents' names	
12. the maternal...	los maternos ...	<u>followed</u> by the maternal grandparents' names (the word "grandparents" is omitted)	
13. the godparents were...	fueron padrinos ...	<u>followed</u> by the names of the godparents	

Other Helpful Vocabulary Words

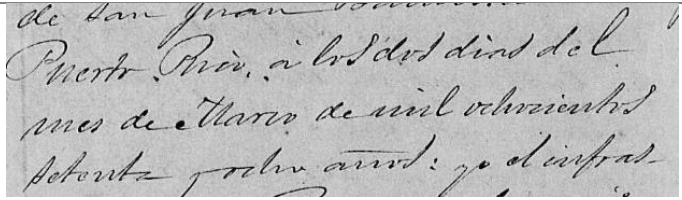
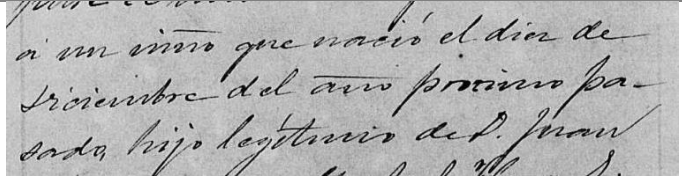
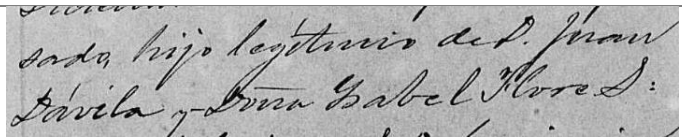
Before the name of a specific place is mentioned, you will see a word describing the type of location (i.e. "village" of "city"). When recording when the child was born, the record may say

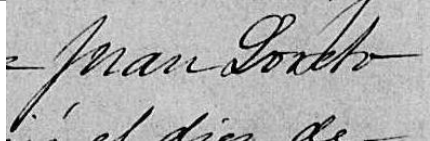
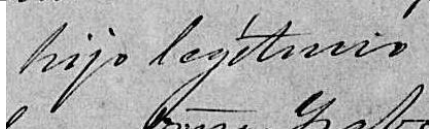
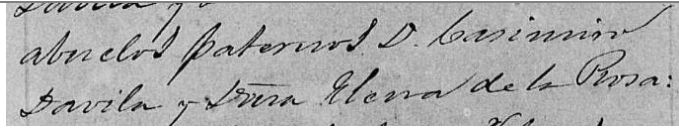
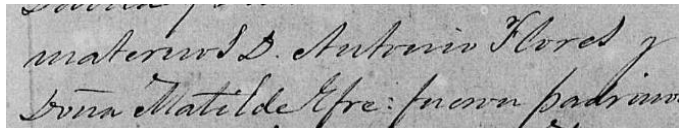
“today” or “yesterday” instead of rewriting the date. At times, a person’s status may be recorded after his or her name, “married,” “widow/er,” and “deceased” being the most common.

village	pueblo
city	ciudad
place	lugar
yesterday	ayer
today	hoy
of this place	del dicho lugar
of this city	de esta ciudad
of the current month	del mes actual
of the same year	del mismo año
Sir / Ma’am (honorific title indicating respect)	Don / Doña
married	casado / casada
widow / widower	viudo / viuda
deceased	difunto / difunta
deceased	finado / finada
alive	que viven

PRACTICE

The last page of this guide contains an image of a birth record. You can also view the image on FamilySearch by clicking [here](#). You can use the FamilySearch word list to complete this practice: https://familysearch.org/wiki/en/Spanish_Genealogical_Word_List

What is the date of the baptism?	This is found after the name of the place. a los dos dias del mes de Marzo de mil ochosientos setenta y ocho años.	 2 March 1878
What is the birth date of the child?	This follows the sex of the child: un niño que nació el diez de diciembre del año próximo pasado.	 10 December last year (1877)
What are the parents' names?	This follows the words hijo legítimo de.	 D[on] Juan Dávila y Doña Ysabel Flores

What is the child's name?	The name will be found directly after the phrase puse el nombre de . In the baptisms, the priest usually will not indicate the surname of the child.	 <p>Juan Loreto</p>
Is this a boy or girl?	Look for the phrase hijo legítimo . Because both words end in an "o" this indicates that the child is a boy	 <p>boy</p>
What are the names of the paternal grandparents?	Their names are located after the words abuelos paternos	 <p>D[on] Casimiro Davila y Doña Elena de la Rosa</p>
What are the names of the maternal grandparents?	When searching for this one you must first locate the word maternos , indicating maternal grandparents.	 <p>D[on] Antonio Flores y Doña Matilde Efre</p>

ACTIVITY

Now, test your skills you have learned in this "How to" Guide. The Activity is a way to check your knowledge and let you know you've mastered the Guide! [Click here](#) to try out the Activity.

252- En la Iglesia parroquial de P.R.
 Dávila Santa María de los Remedios D. Agustín
 Juan en el Sagrario de la Santa Misa y D.
 Lorocho. Iglesia Catedral de la Santa Mercedes
 Noble y muy Leal Ciudad de Iglesias-
 de San Juan Bautista de
 Puerto Rico, a los dos dias del
 mes de Mayo de mil ochocientos
 setenta y ocho años: yo el infras-
 crito cura Párroco de la mis-
 ma, bautice solemnemente, y
 puse el nombre de Juan Lorocho
 a un niño que nació el día de
 trece de Mayo del año próximo pa-
 sado, hijo legítimo de D. Juan
 Dávila y Doña Gabel Flores D.
 abuelos paternos D. Casimiro
 Dávila y Doña Elena de la Rosa:
 abuelos maternos D. Antonio Flores y
 Doña Matilde Ufre: fueron padrinos
 D. Agustín Misa y Doña Mercedes
 Iglesias, a quienes advertí el paren-
 tesco espiritual y sus obligaciones:
 de que doy fe - Dr. Manuel D. Canessa